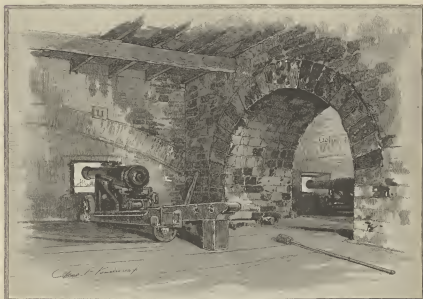


GARRISON LIFE AT GOVERNOR'S ISLAND, NEW YORK HARBOR.



A GUN CASEMATE.

ONE May day we embarked in a small steamer at South Ferry and landed on Governor's Island, a distance of about a thousand yards from New York City. The spire of Trinity, and the clustered towers and domes of the buildings on lower Broadway, reminded us how near we were to the surcharged arteries of commerce; but as we lay under one of the bastions the noisy traffic of the city was altogether inaudible, and we felt the alleviation of a sylvan calm. The grass was in the freshness of early spring, and rippled in the soft wind. We could see Staten Island in the south and the Orange Mountain in the west, both veiled in a purple haze, through which a suggestion of green was glimmering. A multiform procession of vessels was beating toward the narrow estuary of the river, and a few schooners were approaching from the same direction. A perpetual fleet of tows and ferry-boats was breaking the water off Battery Park into foaming eddies and sibilant spray. While the city was so near that we could define the individual loungers in the little sea-bound park, its activity found for us no echo, and we might have been a thousand miles instead of a

thousand yards away from the marts of the world. The metallic ring of the blocks, as one of the schooners altered her tack, and the breathing of the tow-boats, were the only sounds from beyond that reached this insular retreat. A flock of pigeons flapped in and out of the dark port-holes in the circular fort, and a hen marshaled her brood of chickens among a pyramid of black cannon-balls. A soldier in blue uniform, with the red stripe of the artillery down the seam of his trowsers, was crossing the green-sward, and a nursery-maid added the pink of a parasol to the color of the scene as she strolled along the sea-wall. We could hear the voices of some boys who were playing, and of two fishermen who were at work among the shad-nets along the southern shore. The muzzles of cannon pointed at us from the walls of the fort; but peace never seems more permanent than amid the unused materials of war, and idleness became sweet as we sat under the bastion.

Governor's Island is separated from Brooklyn by an arm of the bay about half a mile wide, which at one period was shallow



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF GOVERNOR'S ISLAND.

enough to allow the fording of cattle. The island's area is sixty-two acres, and its elevation is about twenty-two feet above low-water mark. It was the first settlement of the Dutch in New York, and from the number of excellent huts that grew up on it, its aboriginal name of Pagganek was supplanted by that of Hutten Island. During the English colonial period it became a perquisite attached to the office of governor, which fact is the basis of its present nomenclature, and, in the hands of the governors, it was transformed from a barren plantation into a bowery garden.

From the revolution in 1688 to the treaty of Utrecht in 1713, great fears were entertained by the British colonies in North America of an assault by the French navy, and the fortification of Red Hook, the Narrows, and Governor's Island was urged; but notwithstanding the apprehended danger, no measures of defense were taken, other than the appropriation of fifteen thousand pounds for the construction of a fort commanding the Narrows, and this amount was diverted to another purpose. Governor's Island, with its luxurious lawns and groves, was then, as it is now, a charming retreat, and the fifteen



THE FERRY TO GOVERNOR'S ISLAND.

thousand pounds were spent in building a summer-house and garden, where on fine afternoons, under the arching trees that rustled somniferously, the chief magistrate of the province found relief from what Mr. Evarts has sonorously called "the complications of statesmanship and the exactions of politics."

From 1756 until the meeting of the Continental Congress, the island was successively possessed by Governors Hardy, Delancy, Colden, Moore, Dinsmore, and Tryon, some of whom leased it for their personal benefit; and it was not until 1775 that the fortifications were begun. Delayed so long, they then proved of little use. After the battle of Long Island and the discomfiture of the Americans, Admiral Howe

improvement of the fortifications, and in 1794 thirty thousand pounds were appropriated for the purpose; an additional appropriation was made later, and the completion of the work was considered so urgent that the professors and students of Columbia College went in a body to the island and labored on the fortifications with shovels and wheelbarrows. But Fort Jay, as the new structure was called, did not seem adequate, and in 1806 it was replaced by Fort Columbus, the existing fortification, which is an inclosed pentagonal work. Castle William was completed in 1811.

This is a circular granite battery built on a bed of rocks at the extreme westerly point of the island, which being submerged at



CONFEDERATE PRISONERS IN FORT COLUMBUS.

sailed up the bay and anchored off Governor's, from which the garrison under Colonel Prescott retreated to the city without other loss than the arm of a soldier, which was shot off by a ball from a British ship as he was embarking. The abandonment of the city by the Americans left the island in possession of the enemy, who further fortified it and garrisoned it; but at the conclusion of the war it fell into disuse, and in 1784, Governor George Clinton leased it to a person who built a hotel and race-course upon it. Races were run in 1785 and 1786. A renewed fear of invasion, this time by the French, led to petitions for the

low water was formerly a peril to navigation. The castle, with its tiers of cannon, has a formidable look to passengers by the Staten Island ferry-boats which pass and repass within hailing distance of it, but it is in a condition of crumbling decay, and the guns of a *Thunderer* would make short work of leveling it. During the war of the rebellion, as many as eleven hundred prisoners were confined in the castle at one time, and it is still used for a few military offenders. We pass a sentry at the gate whose bayonet is twinkling in the sunshine, and beyond the narrow portals we stand in the reverberant amphitheater formed by the circular walls.



SALLY-PORT, FORT COLUMBUS.

It is chilly and humid in here: the air is prison-like, but the dome of azure sky and feathery clouds is ample. The prisoners are not deprived of sunshine and cannot complain of austere treatment. They are employed about the grounds of the fort, and though they are guarded in deference to the military code by a soldier with loaded musket and revolver, they usually find so much fellow-feeling in him that their industry is not overtaxed. While we sat under the bastion, a pair of them passed from one mound to another with loads of earth, and their pace was measured to the furthest possible prolongation of idleness; meantime the custodian rested on his musket at a distance, and it seemed that if the men had been more energetic they would not have harmonized as well with the peaceful scene.

The cells are entered from galleries around the amphitheater, and their space is alternated with batteries. Not all the guns are mounted, and parts of the tiers are unoccupied. The crust of whitewash is falling off the stone walls in flakes which spot the floors, and the buildings have an air of untidiness. The heavy doors of the cells are grated, and the windows are set in port-

holes pierced six or seven feet through the walls of the castle. The bedding is rolled up, and on a center-table of common boards a small Bible and a prayer-book are swamped in a superabundant assortment of sensational periodicals. The deep-set windows in the ports reveal glimpses of the refulgent bay and the purple heights of Staten Island: it is like looking through an inverted telescope, so distant does the point of view seem from the object; but the prisoners do not devote their leisure to the outlook: they spend their evenings largely in card-playing or in reading the sensational literature aforesaid.

Until a few years ago, Governor's Island was a recruiting depot, and the constant arrival of newly enlisted men and their subsequent departure for the frontier provided variety and excitement for the permanent dwellers in the fort. Many of the recruits were Germans, who, landing with little money, soon found themselves impoverished and, without a knowledge of English, unable to obtain employment. The recruiting officer was glad to accept them: they were honest, industrious and vigorous; he spent a few hours "about town" with them, treated them to beer and extolled the pro-

fession of arms. Passed by the surgeon and transported to the island, they suffered many indignities from the petty officers and the impositions of the men; their kits were despoiled, and their inability to understand some of the orders led to peremptory punishments. Finding that every article of his outfit had been stolen, except the clothing he wore and a pair of trowsers, one recruit determined to save the latter at all events,

at isolated forts, far from civilization, and where it too often happened they fell into a pitiable state of unambitious inaction. The recruiting depot is now at David's Island, in the Sound.

Massive as the walls of the castle are, the concussion produced by the discharge of a cannon causes them to sway alarmingly. Some time ago, the commandant was Colonel Loomis, who, either on Washington's



THE SUNDOWN GUN.

and secretly stowed them away in one of the big guns. On the following day, some dignitary sailed down the bay and a salute was ordered. The cannon thundered in proper succession until the time of that containing the recruit's trowsers came, when there was an unaccountable pause. The officers stormed, and the men were dismayed; the match ignited, but the charge would not explode. When another gun had been loaded and fired as a substitute, the cause of the failure was sought and discovered, to the unspeakable disgust of the gunner, who vented his wrath with an oath, of which under the extenuating circumstances his superior officers did not choose to take notice.

It was the custom to transfer recruits soon after their reception to the Western frontier, where, in many instances, the whole term of their service was spent in a fruitless life

birthday or on the Fourth of July, delayed ordering a salute until a late moment. The guns were quickly loaded, and in the haste they were discharged before their muzzles were properly out of the port-holes. A petty officer and his wife occupied one of the apartments over the battery. Every piece of furniture in their room was completely dismembered; the chairs and tables fell into chaotic heaps; the feathers fluttered out of a new-fashioned helmet, and an infirm old lady bounded into the air with the resilience of childhood. This incident was narrated to us by Hospital-Steward Robertson, who has been stationed at Fort Columbus some twenty-five years.

The view from the parapet of the castle reaches far and wide over the river and the bay, which quivers and twinkles in the spring sunshine. There are guns even up here, and the sparrows twitter garrulously.



CASTLE WILLIAM.

over the black pyramids of shot. The area of the island is now fully revealed,—the granite grass-crowned bastions, the low earth-works, the verdant moat, the monotonous buildings of the arsenal, the vivid sweep of lawn before the officers' quarters, and the preëminent flag-staff with its tri-colored banner, which is drawn out by the breeze to its full proportions.

Some of the men in the garrison aver that the ghost of John Yates Beall, who was hanged here in 1865, stalks along the parapet in the moonlight.

In 1864, the United States steamer *Michigan*, the only guard-ship on the great lakes, was anchored off Johnson's Island in Sandusky Bay, where nearly two thousand five hundred Confederate prisoners were confined. Beall conceived the project of capturing the vessel, releasing the prisoners, and reducing the towns along the shore.

One morning in September, the steamer connecting Detroit with Sandusky was seized by twenty-four armed men, who had come on board as passengers, bringing with them various innocent-looking trunks, which contained their weapons. The crew was overpowered, and the passengers were landed. Another steamer was seized and scuttled, and the pirates, at whose head was John Yates Beall, proceeded for Johnson's Island. It had been previously arranged that a Confederate named Cole should, in an assumed character, become acquainted with the officers of the *Michigan*, and that while he was entertaining them on shore, Beall should seize their vessel. Cole made himself popular on board the *Michigan*, and his invitations to a dinner were willingly accepted. When the hour of the entertainment arrived, Beall was standing off the harbor, waiting for a signal that was to indicate

that Cole had succeeded in his purpose of drugging the officers' wine. He waited impatiently and in vain. As the signal did not come, he wished to attack the *Michigan* without coöperation from the land, but his men mutinied, and he was compelled to retreat. Cole's real character had been discovered at the last moment. Beall scuttled his steamer, and became a fugitive for four months, when he was captured at Suspension Bridge. He was sentenced to death by the late Governor Dix, and was hanged on Governor's Island, February 24th, 1865.

On the south side of the island, reaching from Castle William to Buttermilk Channel, a low sea-wall has been erected, and it is a favorite promenade of the nursery girls, who avert their eyes as the handsome young prisoners pass with the loads of earth. The

artillery in various forms, and acres of shells, in the hollows of which some wrens have built their nests. The cannon are stacked in terraces, and stroke the ground with their sinister lengths. The shot is erected in uniform and numberless pyramids. But the sun falls softly on these implements of war, and the incidents in their history, which the clerk of the ordnance imparts to us, seem unreal. The clerk of the ordnance is an intelligent, familiar, self-possessed little man, who surveys his domain with great complacency. He has the air of one who feels that the destructive power of the implements around him is within his personal control. "It's a great responsibility," his manner distinctly says; and it really is, for, besides the care of the arsenal, the clerk has the superintendence of much perilous work.



A TWENTY-FIVE-TON GUN.

blocks of granite deposited on the grass for future absorption in the wall are occupied by readers and idlers in an agreeable state of passivity. The children are omnipresent, and their amusements reflect the military bent given to their fancies by the surroundings. There are enough toy drums, trumpets, cocked hats, and wooden cavalry-horses to stock a shop. While the nursery maids are sunning themselves on the sea-wall, scenes of carnage are being enacted on the green-sward by their charges, and victories are won in the realm of the imagination, compared with which the most brilliant pages of history are lusterless.

An immense quantity of military material is stored along the northern shore. There are dilapidated trains of battery wagons,

Accidents happen occasionally from the carelessness of the men employed. When condemned pistol cartridges are emptied, some loose powder is found attached to them, and they are cleared of it by being burned in a fire. Several months ago, a man who was engaged in this work threw a wheelbarrow load into the flames, and retraced his way to the large open bin containing the empty shells, upon which he sat down. Presumably a spark of fire had clung to his trousers, for in an instant the bin exploded, and he was very severely burned. The clerk of the ordnance has invented an ingenious machine for emptying the condemned cartridges. It is a deep trough filled with water and fitted with a double tray. The cartridges are placed percussion



A COLONIAL GOVERNOR TAKING HIS EASE.

end up, in rows of circular perforations made in the lower shelf of the tray, over which the upper shelf is closed. The upper shelf is fitted with a series of pins that correspond in position with the cartridges, and when it is closed a workman

strikes the heads of the pins in quick succession; the points explode the cartridges as the needle of a modern carbine would do, and the load is expelled into the water of the trough.

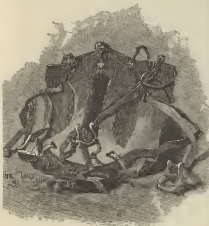
The clerk led us through the cool, dark gal-



MEXICAN ARMOR IN THE MUSEUM.

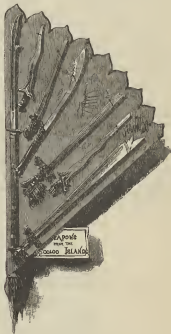
leries of the stores in which the muskets were stacked from the floors to the ceilings, some of them twisted and bent by service, others unused, and of the latest pattern.

Passing out of the stores, along a path bordered by cannon, we reach a superb lawn threaded by vivid walks of red brick, set with the smooth exactitude of a mosaic. When the lamps are glimmering in the summer twilight, and the foliage hangs duskily against the gray and crimson sky, there are



OLD ARTILLERY SADDLE IN THE MUSEUM.

few prettier places than the green on Governor's Island. The water of the bay is dyed to a coppery yellow by the reflected light, and the sailing-vessels move along like phantoms. The band plays in the pavilion, and the most animated airs sound distant and pensive. The beauty of the scene is appreciated by many loungers, and perhaps the young officers in attendance on the pretty ladies in muslin are most susceptible to the pervading tenderness of the hour. But the green is attractive at all times; in the afternoon, the children have



possession of the walks, and their voices lend another charm. No wonder that Governor's Island is considered the most desirable station an army officer can have. The garrison ladies have many fair young friends who come to stay a week or longer, and occasionally an entertainment is given, to which guests come from the city. The officers have a club-house, incipient yet, but comfortable, for smoking, reading, and gossip. The club also possesses the nucleus of a museum; and in an adjoining apartment the remains of Sheridan's famous war-horse are embalmed. Prior to our visit a little boy stood in mute admiration of the defunct charger

for a few minutes, and then, turning to his mother, said:

"When General Sheridan dies, I suppose they'll stuff him, too, and mount him on Winchester."

The island is at present the head-quarters of the Department of the Atlantic, of which General Hancock is commander. Fort Columbus is occupied by two batteries of artillery, numbering about one hundred men. Many improvements have been made under General Hancock's administration. The ferriage has been abolished, and the private boat succeeded by a government steamer with excellent accommodations. The yield of the wells being impure, Brooklyn water has been introduced by a flexible pipe carried under Buttermilk Channel, and it is proposed to bring illuminating gas to the island in the same way. Several tasteful cottages have been built for the staff officers, and the grounds are now as carefully cultivated as when the old colonial governors smoked their after-dinner pipes and lived in agreeable ease on the pretty little island.

Fort Columbus, with its five bastions, fills the center of the island, and is surrounded by a moat, in which the grass is smooth and intensely green. Beyond the sally-port, which is surmounted by an elaborate group of statuary, we enter a cool archway leading into a hollow square,

formed by the quarters of the officers and men. There is a lawn in front and intersecting walks between. The buildings have wide piazzas, which are abundantly supplied with easy-chairs made by the convicts at Fort Leavenworth, and a soldier's life is probably less irksome at Fort Columbus than at any other post. The barracks are clean, well-ventilated, and in good repair. The ordinary rations are supplemented by supplies of fresh fish and plenty of garden produce. Among various other resources of amusement, the men have a "coterie," which gives entertainments once a month, and a theater, which is utilized for negro minstrelsy. The theater is a small apartment over the barracks; a miniature stage is erected, and the proscenium is decorated with silhouettes of cannon, shields, and eagles. When interrogated as to the available talent, one of the corporals became fervid. "Some of the men sings exquisite, and plays the pe-an-er bully!" he declared. The theater is also used as a reading-room, and a center-table is filled with a variety of periodicals.

On the sea-wall outside Castle William stands the gun which, as the sun disappears behind the deep-blue hills in the west, proclaims the end of day to the city. At the same moment the flag flutters down from the staff, the bugle calls to quarters, and night falls on the garrison at Governor's Island.

THE HEART OF A ROSE.

A ROSE like a hollow cup with a brim—
A brim as pink as the after-glow;
Deep down in its heart gold stamens swim,
Tremble and swim in a sea of snow.
My Love set it safe in a crystal glass,
Gently as petals float down at noon.
Low, in a whisper, my Love's voice said:
"Look quick! In an hour it will be dead.
I picked it because it will die so soon.
Now listen, dear Heart, as the seconds pass,
What the rose will say," my Love's voice said.

I look and I listen. The flushed pink brim
Is still as June's warmest after-glow;
Silent as stars the gold stamens swim,
Tremble and swim in their sea of snow.
I dare not breathe on the crystal glass,
Lest one sweet petal should fall too soon.
False was the whisper my Love's voice said—
If he had not picked it, it had been dead.
But now it will live an eternal noon,
And I shall hear, as the seconds pass,
What the rose will say till I am dead.